United States Patent Application No. 10/033,532
Amendment dated September 4, 2007
In Reply to Office Action dated May 3, 2007

Docket No. GS-080 Cont.

Amendments of the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the above-identified patent application.

Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television program using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded; [[and a]]

entering an unblocking criterion for overriding unblocking a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a plurality of programs for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the overriding unblocking criterion; and

unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the overriding unblocking criterion so they can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

2-9. (canceled)

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password is established by a first-time user.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by a user when in the master mode.

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12. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the password can be changed by repeatedly entering an incorrect password for a predetermined number of times and confirming the repeatedly entered password at the end of the entering step.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until a television configured to display the television program is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the parental control functions include a power-outage function to deny access to a television configured to display the television program until the password is properly entered, after a power outage.

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the blocking and ~~overriding~~ unblocking criteria are entered in a normal television picture viewing mode using an on-screen menu.

16. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the blocking and ~~overriding~~ unblocking criteria are entered in a guide mode using an on-screen menu activated from a program schedule guide.

17. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the [[step]] steps of entering the criteria ~~comprises~~ comprise:
    selecting a set of television programs to be watched or recorded in a babysitting mode; and
    permitting only the selected set to be watched or recorded in the babysitting mode without inputting the password, to the exclusion of all other programs being telecast.

18. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the [[step]] steps of entering the criteria ~~comprises~~ comprise:
    selecting a television program to be watched or recorded;

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activating a first on-screen button to block the selected program if the selected program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the selected program if the selected program is blocked.

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the [[step]] steps of entering the criteria ~~comprises~~ comprise:

tuning to a television program;

activating a first on-screen button to block the television program if the program is unblocked; and

activating a second on-screen button to unblock the television program if the program is blocked.

20. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of entering the ~~criteria~~ blocking criterion comprises inputting a parental control level and the prompting step comprises extracting a parental control rating from a television signal carrying the selected program, comparing the rating with the parental control level, and blocking the selected program if its rating falls below the parental control level.

21. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein one of the criteria is blocking ~~or overriding~~ a ~~blocked~~ television channel or television program, or unblocking a blocked television channel or television program.

22. (currently amended) The method of claim 21 wherein the blocked or ~~overridden~~ unblocked television channel or program is marked in a parental control review list.

23. (currently amended) The method of claim 22 wherein the [[step]] steps of entering the criteria ~~comprises~~ comprise editing the parental control review list with respect to channel, date, time and length.

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24. (currently amended) The method of claim 16 wherein the on-screen menu includes a grid feature for blocking or ~~overriding~~ unblocking all television channels whether or not the channels are already blocked or ~~overridden~~ unblocked, a sort feature for blocking or ~~overriding~~ unblocking all television programs in a category, and a time feature for blocking or ~~overriding~~ unblocking by a time of a day or a day of a week.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing access to a predetermined set of functions specified in a user profile if the user does not enter the password.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising restoring the blocking criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

27. (currently amended) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

a microprocessor;

a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the microprocessor;

means for inputting a password for entering into a master mode of operation to obtain access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

means for entering a blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded; [[and a]]

means for entering an unblocking criterion for ~~overriding~~ unblocking a blocked television program;

means for selecting a plurality of programs for viewing or recording;

means for prompting a user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected plurality of programs meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the ~~overriding~~ unblocking criterion;

means for unblocking the selected plurality of programs that meet the blocking criterion and do not meet the ~~overriding~~ unblocking criterion so they can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt; and

means for restoring the <u>blocking</u> criterion after the user is no longer in the master mode.

28. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

29. (currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

entering a second criterion for ~~overriding~~ <u>unblocking</u> blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a program for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the ~~blocking~~ <u>first</u> criterion and does not meet the ~~overriding~~ <u>second</u> criterion; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the ~~blocking~~ <u>first</u> criterion and does not meet the ~~overriding~~ <u>second</u> criterion so it can be viewed <u>or recorded,</u> if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising entering a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

31. (currently amended) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a first blocking criterion for blocking a television program from being viewed or recorded; [[and a]]

entering an unblocking criterion for overriding unblocking a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a program for viewing or recording;

prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding unblocking criterion; and

unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the overriding unblocking criterion so it can be viewed or recorded, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt, wherein the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

32. (currently amended) The method of claim 31, further comprising entering a second blocking criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

33. (previously presented) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

entering a criterion for unblocking a blocked television program to be viewed or recorded;

selecting a plurality of programs for viewing or recording; and

unblocking the selected plurality of programs if the selected programs are blocked television programs that meet the unblocking criterion.

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34. (previously presented) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

storing a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded based on stored information relating to the television programs;

storing a second criterion for unblocking television programs blocked by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded;

receiving a user selection for a program for viewing or recording; and

unblocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, further comprising storing a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

36. (previously presented) A method of exercising access control over a television using a parental control user interface having different functions that are available to a user in a master mode of operation, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

storing a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded based on stored information relating to the television programs;

storing a second criterion for unblocking television programs blocked by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded;

receiving a user selection for a program for viewing or recording; and

unblocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking, wherein

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the master mode of operation remains in effect until the television is turned off, the user exits the master mode, or a time delay expires.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 36, further comprising storing a third criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded.

38. (currently amended) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

a microprocessor;

a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the microprocessor;

means for inputting a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

means for entering a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded;

means for entering a second criterion for ~~overriding~~ unblocking blocked television programs to be viewed or recorded;

means for selecting a program for viewing or recording;

means for prompting the user not in the master mode to enter the password if the selected program meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the ~~overriding~~ unblocking criterion; and

means for unblocking the selected program that meets the blocking criterion and does not meet the ~~overriding~~ unblocking criterion so it can be viewed, if the user enters the password responsive to the prompt.

39. (previously presented) An apparatus for parental control of a television comprising:

a microprocessor;

a parental control user interface having different functions for activating the microprocessor;

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means for receiving a password for entering into the master mode for obtaining access to the functions of the parental control user interface;

means for storing a first criterion for blocking television programs from being viewed or recorded based on stored information relating to the television programs;

means for storing a second criterion for unblocking television programs blocked by the first criterion for blocking from being viewed or recorded;

means for receiving a user selection for a program for viewing or recording; and

means for unblocking the selected program so it can be viewed or recorded, if the selected program meets both the first criterion for blocking and the second criterion for unblocking.